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ABSTRACT

The Nevada Proficiency Examination Program was established by legislative mandate in 1977. It consists of two major assessment efforts: administration of a nationally normed test to grades 3, 6, and 9; and the testing of all 11th graders in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students must pass all three examinations as a precondition for receiving a standard high school diploma. Results for these components are presented in separate sections for the 1989-90 school year. The Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) were used in grades 3, 6, and 9 in Nevada for the first time in 1989-90; and writing in grade 9 was assessed with a test developed by the state. Consistencies that can be gleaned from the data for the first year of CTBS use are generally positive. Nevada public school students scored at a higher level than their counterparts in the norm group on all norm-referenced measures in the three grades. Ninety percent of the students met or exceeded the criteria of the writing test. On the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination, more students than expected achieved the required 90%. Writing results indicate a high level of proficiency relative to the criteria established. Results for students who retook the examinations after failing them at least once indicate that less than 1% of Nevada's public high school students fail to receive a standard diploma due to their inability to pass these examinations. Appendices contain statutes and regulatory provisions governing the assessments, the scoring guide for the writing assessment, and common test score scales used in education. Six figures and one table of test results are provided. (SLD)

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Introduction

The Nevada Proficiency Examination Program was established by legislative mandate in 1977. That legislation, as amended in 1983 and 1987, is included as appendix A.

The law provided for the administration of examinations of proficiency and achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics before the completion of grades three, six, nine and twelve. It also permitted the adoption of different standards of proficiency for pupils with diagnosed learning disabilities and prohibited the disclosure of the content of the tests or their correct answers, except as required to administer or evaluate the examinations or as required by a state officer in the performance of his/her duties.

Legislation passed in 1979 required that the results of these examinations be reported annually to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The proficiency examination program can be conceptualized as consisting of two major assessment efforts. The first involves the administration of a nationally normed standardized test of academic achievement in reading and mathematics at grades 3, 6, and 9, and in language at grades 3 and 6. An holistically scored direct writing assessment is administered at grade 9. These tests are intended to identify those students who might require additional assistance in order to maintain the typical pattern of promotion through the grades. The second major assessment effort involves the testing of all eleventh-grade students in reading, mathematics, and writing, using state-developed minimum competency examinations. Students must pass all three examinations as a precondition for receiving a standard high school diploma. Although the examinations are initially administered at grade eleven, students who fail to pass them on their first attempt are given three additional opportunities during their senior year to take the test(s) previously failed. A student who fails to pass one or more of the high school proficiency examinations may be awarded a certificate of attendance, in lieu of a diploma, if he/she has reached the age of seventeen years.

Results for these two major components of the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program are presented in separate sections in the report that follows.

The Nevada Proficiency Examination at Grade 3, 6, and 9

The Tests

Representatives of the Nevada Department of Education and the state's seventeen school districts conducted an extensive review of commercially available nationally normed standardized tests during the 1988-89 academic year. This effort resulted in the adoption of the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, 4th edition (CTBS/4), for the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program at grades 3, 6, and 9, beginning with the 1989-90 academic year. Due to differences in the objectives measured by the test, test content, and the more recent national norms, which were established in 1988, the results reported below are not directly comparable to those reported in previous years when other tests were used.

Regulations which govern the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program are to be found in Chapter 389 of the Nevada Administrative Code (see Appendix B). These regulations prescribed that the Total Reading, Total Mathematics, and Total Language scales of the CTBS/4 be administered as examinations of achievement and proficiency at grades three and six in the 1989-90 academic year. The language test of the CTBS/4 was prescribed as an appropriate measure of writing proficiency at these grades, in lieu of one or more direct writing samples.

At grade nine, the Total Reading and Total Mathematics scales of the CTBS/4 were prescribed. Writing at grade nine was assessed using a test developed and scored by the Nevada Department of Education. It consisted of one writing sample on each of two specified topics. The samples were holistically scored for the students' ability to use standard conventions and usage and to convey a clear and coherent message on the assigned topic.

Times of Administration and Scoring

The procedures for the administration of the proficiency examinations, specified in the Code, permit the administration of the standardized tests during any time period for which the publisher provides either empirical or interpolated national norms. Thus, school districts had wide latitude in the choice of times for administration of the standardized tests. Administration within the time periods for which the publisher had established empirical norms was encouraged.

The CTBS/4 compares each student's performance to the performance of a representative national sample of students in the same grade who took the test during comparable periods in the 1987-1988 academic year. This procedure yields a percentile score for each student that indicates the percentage of students in the normative sample

that scored at or below the student's achievement level. This was the metric used to determine whether or not the student had demonstrated adequate achievement. Since students tested in the fall were compared to their counterparts who took the tests in the fall, and those tested in the spring were compared to counterparts tested in the spring, the percentile scores are comparable, expressing the student's standing relative to his/her appropriate reference group.

The writing test at grade nine required the student to write for approximately thirty minutes on each of two specified topics. Each writing sample was holistically scored on a criterion-referenced scale that ranged from one to six. The Scoring Guide for the writing assessment is included as Appendix C of this report. Ninth grade writing tests were administered in October, 1988.

Standards for Proficiency

Scores considered to demonstrate proficiency on the standardized tests administered at grades three, six and nine were those at or above the 23rd percentile on the scale of individual norms for the CTBS/4. That is, students were required to score above the level achieved by the lowest 22 percent of the appropriate normative sample in order to be considered proficient in the subject matter tested.

Unlike the norm-referenced tests described above, the writing test administered at grade 9 is criterion-referenced. That is, each student is required to demonstrate predetermined skills in writing in order to be considered proficient, independent of the performance of his/her peers or a comparable reference group. Each writing sample was scored on a scale that ranged from one to six and only students whose total score from the two writing samples was greater than or equal to six were considered to be proficient in writing. The quality of writing required to be judged as minimally proficient can be ascertained from review of the standards for a score of three in the scoring guide in Appendix C.

Consequences of Failure to Pass One or More of the Proficiency Examinations at Grade 3, 6, or 9

A student who fails to pass one or more of the proficiency examinations at grades 3, 6, or 9 can be promoted. However, the results of the examination(s) failed are intended to be evaluated to determine what remedial instruction would be appropriate. Schools are expected to provide instruction that differs from the usual course of study in the process of remediation, as the examination results are interpreted to indicate that the student is not making satisfactory progress through the general curriculum.

Results at Grades 3 and 6

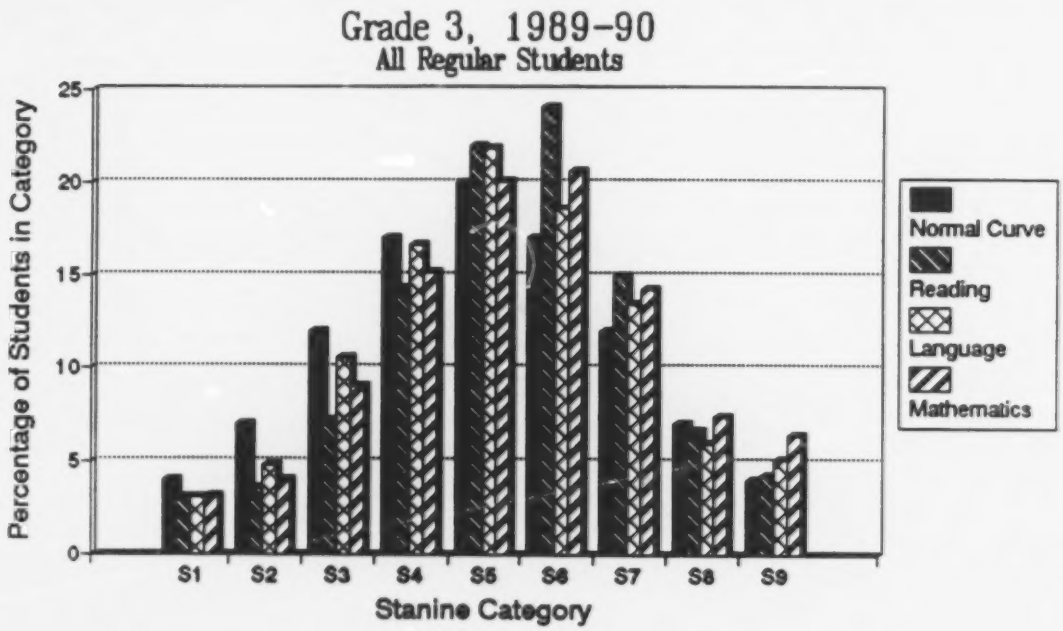
The minimum standards for passing the proficiency examinations at grades 3 and 6 were adopted, at least in part, to coincide with the reporting standards of the test publishers. CTB/McGraw Hill, publisher of the CTBS/4, reports results for individuals on a variety of scales. One of their standards is the stanine distribution. This scale divides the range of possible scores into nine intervals. Stanines two through eight represent equal intervals on the scale of achievement. That is, the difference between the students scoring at the lower boundary and those scoring at the upper boundary of each stanine is intended to represent a constant amount of achievement on an absolute scale. As a result, tests which have a normal distribution of scores (the familiar bell-shaped curve) will place different proportions of students in each of the stanines between two and nine. From the chart presented as Appendix D, it can be seen that approximately 7%, 12%, 17%, 20%, 17%, 12%, and 7% of the students tested would be expected to score within the ranges represented by stanines two through eight, respectively. Stanine one includes approximately 4% of students in the norm group that achieved the lowest scores on the test and the ninth stanine includes approximately 4% of the highest scoring students in the normative sample.

Using the stanine scale as a reference, students who score in stanines one through three fail to meet the standards for demonstrating adequate achievement. Students who score in stanines four and above are not expected to require remediation in the subject tested in order to make normal progress. The selection of the 23rd percentile, the lower boundary of the fourth stanine, as the minimum passing score on these examinations helps to insure that those students who fail the examination are, in fact, achieving at a level that is below-average when compared to the norm group. That is, it is unlikely that the student's low score could have resulted solely from errors in measurement.

Districts reported test results for grades three and six to the State Department of Education in terms of the number of students taking the test, the number scoring within each stanine, the percentage of students demonstrating adequate achievement, and the mean Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) at each grade. This latter scale, the NCE is a scale adopted by the federal government for the reporting of student achievement as measured by standardized tests in specified federal programs. It is derived from the normalized distribution of scores achieved by students in the normative sample for the test and divides the range of scores achieved by 98 percent of that group into 98 equal units. The reader should take care not to confuse the NCE, which has a mean of 50 and a range from 1 to 99, with the percentile rank, which has a mean of 50 and a range from 0 to 100. These two scales coincide only at their means and at the first and ninety-ninth percentiles. The differences can be seen by comparing the "Percentile Equivalents" with the "NCE Scores" below the figure in Appendix D. The reader will note that the percentile changes rapidly near the mean of the distribution and changes very little near the extremes. In contrast, the NCE changes at a constant rate throughout its range.

The mean NCE provides a convenient measure of central tendency for reporting statewide results. If the mean NCE for the state is above 50, Nevada's students, on the average, scored higher than the students in the 1987-88 norm group. In addition, the presentation of the percentage of students in each stanine provides an opportunity to compare the distribution of scores achieved by Nevada's students with the distribution of scores in the normative sample, which is represented by the normal curve in the figures which follow.

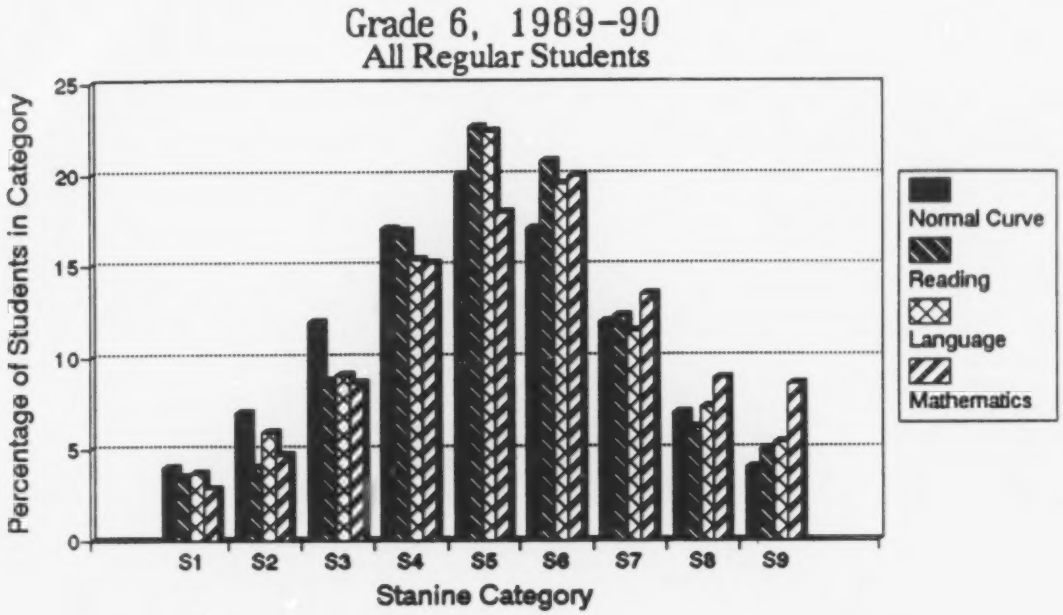
Nevada's results at grade three in reading, language, and mathematics are presented in Figure 1.



Subject	Number Tested	Mean NCE	Percent Demonstrating Adequate Achievement
Reading	14,413	52.8	86.2
Language	14,367	51.3	81.6
Mathematics	14,483	52.9	83.9

Figure 1 Percentage of students in Grade 3 scoring in each stanine category on tests of reading, language, and mathematics from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Level 13.

It should be noted, in Figure 1, that the percentage of students that scored in stanine categories one through three on each of the three tests represents the percentage of students that failed to demonstrate adequate achievement on that test. For reading, mathematics and language, that percentage is below the expected 23 percent. The success of Nevada's third grade students is similarly reflected in the excess of students in the middle and upper stanine groups (stanines 5 through 9).



Subject	Number Tested	Mean NCE	Percent Demonstrating Adequate Achievement
Reading	12,319	51.5	83.8
Language	12,355	50.4	81.3
Mathematics	12,358	53.8	83.8

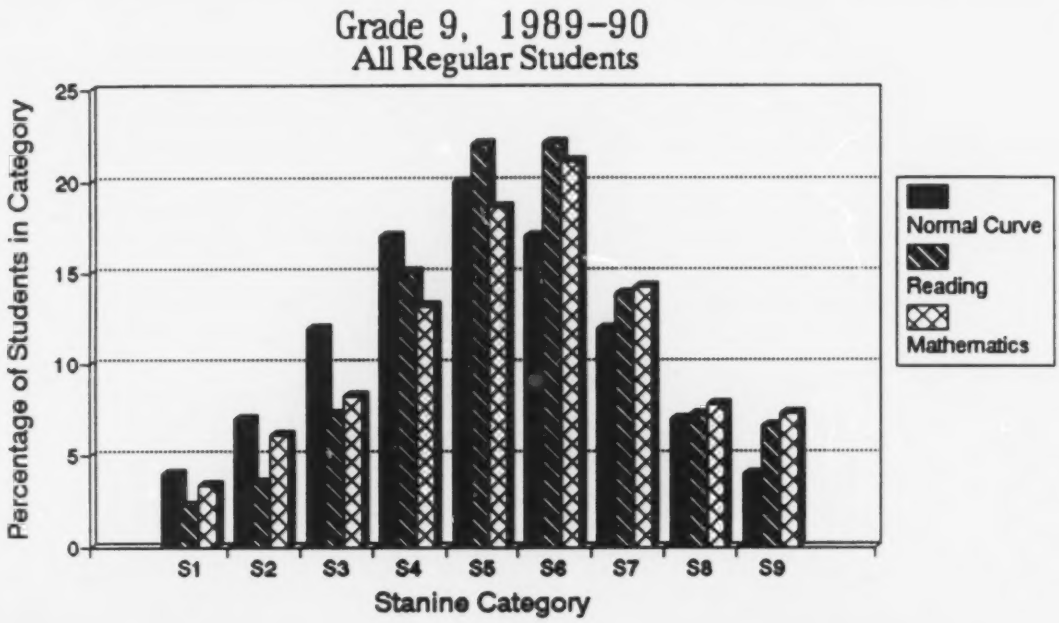
Figure 2 Percentage of students in Grade 6 scoring in each stanine category on tests of reading, language, and mathematics from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Level 16.

The results for Nevada's sixth-grade students are presented in Figure 2, above. The reader will note that they are quite similar to those at grade three. However, the sixth-grade scores do not differ from the norm as markedly as do the scores at grade three.

Results at Grade 9

Students in grade 9 were required to take only the reading and mathematics sections of the CTBS/4. The requirement that students demonstrate adequate achievement in writing was met through the administration of a direct writing assessment at this grade level.

Results for reading and mathematics are presented in Figure 3.



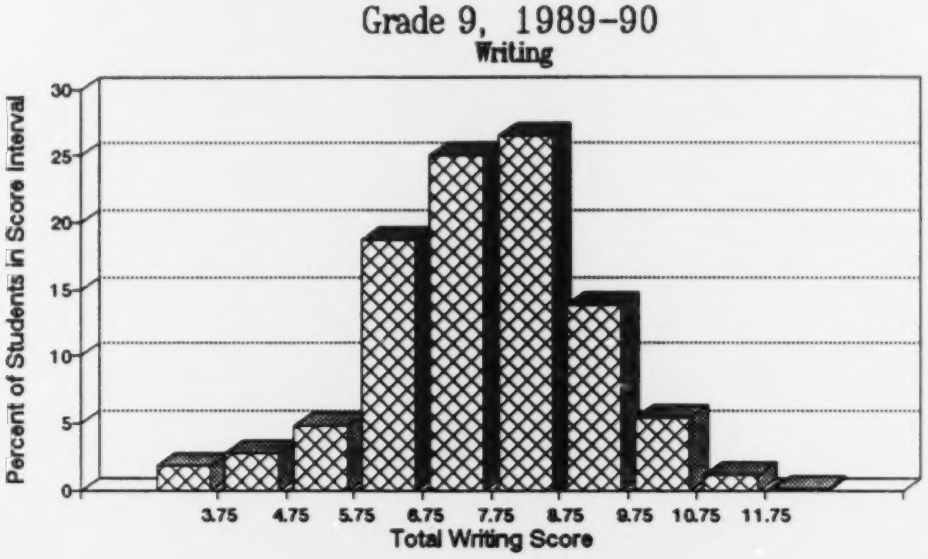
Subject	Number Tested	Mean NCE	Percent Demonstrating Adequate Achievement
Reading	11,191	54.3	87.0
Mathematics	11,150	53.2	82.3

Figure 3 Percentage of students in Grade 9 scoring in each stanine category on tests of reading and mathematics from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Level 19/20.

At grade nine, as at grades three and six, an excess of students scored in the middle and upper stanines so that the percentage demonstrating adequate achievement exceeds the expected value of 78%. The mean NCE also exceeds 50 for both subjects.

The direct writing assessment administered at grade nine requires the student to write to each of two topics during one sixty-minute period. The holistic scoring guide (included as Appendix C) provides a criterion reference for each score. That is, each writing sample must have specific characteristics in order to earn a given score. At least two teachers hired by the Department of Education read each sample and the scores assigned by them are averaged to provide a single score for the topic in the range from one to six. The scores from the two topics are then added to provide a total writing score for each student. These totals may range from two to twelve.

Since the scoring guide provides unique criteria for each score, Figure 4 presents the results for the writing test in terms of the proportion of students scoring within specified ranges.



Subject	Number Tested	Mean Total Writing	Total Writing S. D.	Percent Demonstrating Adequate Achievement
Writing	11,531	7.5	2.4	90.7

Figure 4 Percentage of students in Grade 9 scoring in each of ten score intervals on the direct writing assessment.

The criterion for demonstrating adequate achievement was a total score of 6 from the two writing samples. This standard was new in the 1989-90 school year, the minimum

score being raised from five to six by the State Board of Education in September, 1989. Thus, the percentage demonstrating adequate achievement in this academic year is not directly comparable to that figure for previous years.

As indicated in Figure 4, 90.7% of Nevada's ninth grade public school students who took the writing test demonstrated adequate achievement.

Discussion of Results at Grades 3, 6, and 9

The reader should be cautioned not to compare results either across subject areas or across grades. These data are cross-sectional and provide one indicator of the status of education in Nevada's public schools at a single point in time. Differences in the results for different subjects within a grade level could be accounted for by relatively minor differences in the fit between the contents of the tests used and curricula employed by the schools. Differences among grade levels could represent differing degrees of concordance between test and curriculum content across grade levels or minor differences among cohorts, the particular group of students at a grade level in a particular year.

As mentioned earlier, results in reading, language, and mathematics are not comparable to those from previous years due to the initial use of the CTBS/4 in 1989-90. Results in writing, indicated by the proportion of students demonstrating adequate achievement, are not directly comparable to previous years due to the higher standard implemented in 1989-90.

Those consistencies that can be gleaned from the data are generally positive. Nevada's public school students achieved at a higher level than their counterparts in the norm group on all norm-referenced measures administered at grades three, six, and nine. The two consistencies are the higher proportion of Nevada's students scoring in the middle and upper stanines (5 through 9) and the higher average achievement of these students, represented by a mean NCE greater than 50 when compared to the 1987-88 norm group.

The higher percentage of students that demonstrate adequate achievement in writing cannot be interpreted to mean that Nevada's students write better than they read or calculate. It does mean that more than 90% of the students tested demonstrated their ability to produce writing samples that meet or exceeded the criterion described for a score of three. A similar statement cannot be made for student performance on the norm-referenced measures. Individuals who have an intimate knowledge of the contents of the norm-referenced measures might be able to describe the differences in the types of behavior that might be expected from students who scored at different levels on the test. However, even the well informed layman could not be expected to provide such a description. He can only be certain that, whatever skills are being tested, Nevada students showed more of them than their counterparts in the norm groups.

The Nevada Proficiency Examination Program at Grade 11

The Tests

The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination consists of examinations in reading, writing, and mathematics, developed by the Nevada Department of Education. The initial administration of these examinations at grade eleven satisfies the statutory requirement that each student demonstrate proficiency in these basic skill areas before completion of grade 12. It also makes available a year for remediation, during which a student who fails one or more examinations on his/her first attempt is given three additional opportunities to pass the test(s) failed.

The contents of these high school proficiency examinations are described in the Nevada Administrative Code. The excerpts of the Code that deal with proficiency testing, included as Appendix B, reflect revisions to the Code which were adopted in the fall of 1989. However, the tests that were administered through the 1988-89 academic year were those developed under earlier regulations, adopted in 1985. The process which provided the foundation for development of the tests used during the 1988-89 academic year, and the competencies which they measured, can be briefly described as follows.

The competency statements that guided the production of these tests were developed in a five-step process. First, a task force of teachers from across the state was convened to determine which competencies should be required for graduation. Second, a task force of teachers, counselors, principals and other school administrators refined the work of the first task force and recommended procedures to be used in setting minimum competency levels for graduation. Third, an advisory commission composed of private citizens and business people reviewed the work of the task forces. Fourth, working from, and generally consistent with the work of the two task forces and the advisory commission, a committee of Nevada Department of Education staff compiled a set of recommended competencies, and fifth, these recommendations were approved by the State Board of Education as the basis for the Nevada Proficiency Examinations.

When these tasks were completed, concerns were expressed that the examinations in mathematics and reading were not of sufficient difficulty. Reading and mathematics specialists and teachers from around the state were then called together to remedy the situation. This group reviewed both the existing competency statements and those used by other states. They proposed that the scope of both tests be broadened to include higher order skills and submitted their recommendations to the State Board of Education.

The competency statements for the three tests, which were adopted by the board in 1984, to become effective in the spring of 1985, are as follows:

In Reading (competencies adopted in 1984):

The student must demonstrate minimum basic skills in:

(1) Determining the meaning of words in context;
(2) Identifying the details and main idea of a paragraph;
(3) Identifying the sequence of events in a selection or steps in a set of directions;
(4) Making comparisons and contrasts between persons, events or objects;
(5) Identifying the cause of a given effect or the effect of a given cause;
(6) Distinguishing between fact and opinion; and
(7) Predicting outcomes and drawing conclusions based on the material read.

In Writing (competencies adopted in 1987):

The student must demonstrate skills in:

(1) Descriptive or narrative writing;
(2) Expository writing; or
(3) Persuasive writing.

In Mathematics (competencies adopted in 1984):

The student must demonstrate minimum basic skills in:

(1) Adding, subtracting, and multiplying whole numbers and decimals;
(2) Adding, subtracting, and multiplying proper fractions or mixed numbers;
(3) Dividing whole numbers and decimals;
(4) Using formulas to find unknown values;
(5) Performing calculations and solving problems involving percent;
(6) Finding perimeters and areas of rectangles;
(7) Solving problems involving money;
(8) Using measurement systems and solving problems involving measurements;
(9) Comparing numbers;
(10) Solving problems using information obtained from tables, charts, graphs, maps, and scales; and
(11) Solving multi-step problems involving the previous skills.

Times of Administration and Scoring

The writing examination for the High School Proficiency Examination Program was administered statewide to all eleventh-grade students on Wednesday, February 13, 1990. Districts administered the examinations in mathematics and reading during the week of February 11-15 at their discretion.

The scales for the mathematics and reading tests of the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination were developed from the results achieved by groups of students who took the examination between 1984 and 1986, depending on the form administered. Scores range from 200 to 800 and the scales were designed to have a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100. This is the same scale as that used by the College Entrance Examination Board (C.E.E.B.) for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (S.A.T.), which are illustrated in Appendix D.

The writing test at grade eleven, like that at grade nine, consisted of one writing sample on each of two topics. Students were allowed a total of 60 minutes to write on the two prescribed topics. Each sample was holistically scored on a six-point scale using the scoring guide in Appendix C so that the total writing score could range from 2 to 12.

Standards for Proficiency

For the reading and mathematics tests, a minimum scaled score of 370 was required as a demonstration of proficiency. Ten percent of students who took a test with these scale characteristics would be expected to fail if the scores on the test were normally distributed, i.e. they produced the typical bell-shaped curve.

When the scores from the two writing samples were added together, the new standard of 6, discussed under results for grade 9, above, was considered as demonstrating adequate achievement for the 1989-90 academic year. Since the writing examination is a criterion-referenced examination, no predictions can be made about student success on the examination merely from a knowledge of the scale characteristics. An understanding of the meaning of the minimum passing score can be gained from either a review of the holistic scoring guide in Appendix C, with particular attention to the requirements for a score of 3, or through a review of writing samples assigned a score of 3. Unlike the examinations in reading and mathematics, the writing test provides some assurance that particular skill levels have been achieved.

Consequences of Failure to Pass One or More of the Proficiency Examinations at Grade 11

As mentioned in the Introduction, each student must pass the proficiency examinations in all three basic skills areas, in addition to meeting the other state and district requirements for graduation, in order to receive a standard high school diploma. The intent of the program is to help insure that students who fail one or more examinations on their first attempt receive appropriate remedial instruction in the basic skill(s) in preparation for taking the examination again during their senior year. Three opportunities are provided during the student's senior year to retake the test: in October, in February, and near the end of the academic year. Students cannot be awarded a

standard high school diploma until they have satisfactorily passed all three examinations. A student may be awarded a certificate of attendance, in lieu of a diploma, if he/she has reached the age of seventeen years.

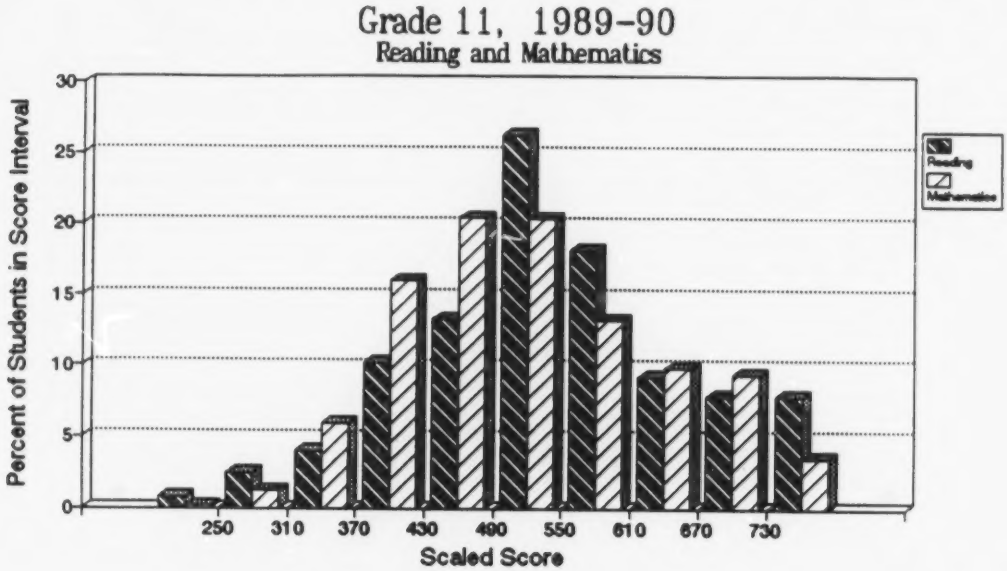
Results at Grade 11

The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination scores in mathematics and reading are not normally distributed. Rather than having the bell shape typical of tests which are designed to measure a broad range of academic achievement, the distribution of scores for these proficiency examinations is negatively skewed. That is, many more students score at the high end of the distribution than the low end, giving the distribution a long tail to the left in the range of the lower scores.

The negatively skewed distribution is appropriate for a test designed to measure minimum competency. The long tail indicates that the test is most sensitive in distinguishing among the achievement levels of low-scoring students. The relative lack of power to discriminate at the upper end of the scale is not a concern for a test used for this purpose.

Results for the high school proficiency examinations in mathematics and reading are reported in Figure 5. The distributions of scores are presented at the top of the Figure and a summary relative to the minimum criteria for demonstrating proficiency is presented at the bottom. In this figure the percentage of students that scored within each 60-point scale score interval between 250 and 730 is represented by the height of the bar, defining eight intervals. The percentage of students scoring at the two extremes form the other two intervals. The number of intervals and their width were selected for their ability to adequately describe the distribution. They should not be confused with the stanine distributions presented for grades three, six, and nine, and it is inappropriate to compare them to the normal curve for reasons described above.

The negative skew of both the mathematics and reading distributions for the eleventh grade is obvious in the distributions presented in Figure 5. There is a much higher frequency of students scoring in the higher score intervals than in the lower intervals. The summary presented at the bottom of the figure includes the number of students that took each test, the scaled score mean and standard deviation for each group, and the percentage of students that passed each test. The means for both tests exceed the expected value of 50 by a considerable amount. These higher means could be simply a manifestation of the typical score inflation that occurs with most tests that have extended periods of exposure and use. The variation among the scores, as measured by the standard deviation, also exceeds the expected value of 100. This may be due, in part, to the skewed shape of the distribution and is not a matter for concern. The percentage of students demonstrating adequate achievement on these examinations are higher than the expected 90%.



Subject	Number Tested	Mean Scale Score	Scale Score S. D.	Percent Demonstrating Adequate Achievement
Reading	10,294	540.6	117.7	92.7
Mathematics	10,275	525.0	120.3	92.6

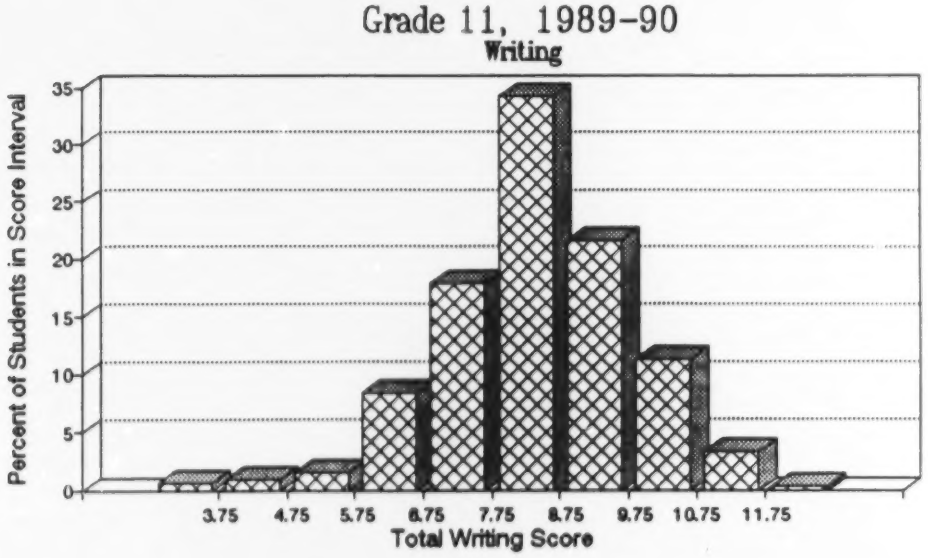
Figure 5 Percentage of students in Grade 11 scoring in each of ten scale score intervals on the High School Proficiency Examinations in reading and mathematics.

The distribution of scores and a summary of results relating to the minimum requirements for demonstrating proficiency in writing are presented in Figure 6.

Unlike the writing test results at ninth grade, the distribution of scores in writing at grade eleven is quite skewed and the success rate is quite high. The higher proportion of students passing the writing test at grade eleven should indicate a real gain in the percentage of students meeting minimum standards, since both the ninth grade and eleventh grade tests are scored according to the same protocol.

Discussion of Results at Grade 11

The percentage of students passing the proficiency examinations in mathematics and reading on their first attempt at grade eleven is somewhat higher than the pass rates



Subject	Number Tested	Mean Total Writing	Total Writing S. D.	Percent Demonstrating Adequate Achievement
Writing	10,090	8.3	2.0	97.0

Figure 6 Percentage of students in Grade 11 scoring in each of ten score intervals on the direct writing assessment.

at grades three, six, and nine, in the 1989-90 academic year. The excess of students meeting minimum proficiency levels (the expected percentage is 90%) is consistent with the observation of a higher mean scale score on these tests. Whether they represent real achievement gains is difficult to judge in the absence of a quality external reference.

Unlike the norm-referenced mathematics and reading scores, the writing results indicate a high level of proficiency relative to the criterion described in the scoring guide. The high pass rate on the criterion-referenced writing examination is consistent with reports of noticeable improvement in the quality of student writing samples by those Nevada English teachers who have participated in the scoring of the writing examinations for a number of years.

The reader should not interpret the failure rates reported above for the eleventh grade examinations as the percentage of students who fail to graduate due to their inability to pass the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination. The data reported are only for the students' first attempt. Typical data for testing at grade 12 indicate that approximately 60% of the students who retake the examination pass. When the rate for each of three additional attempts is combined with the initial success rate, it is estimated that less than one percent of Nevada's public high school students fail to receive a standard diploma due to their inability to pass these proficiency examinations. This estimate is based on the entire population taking the examination, of which approximately five percent are classified as exceptional.

Special Populations

1989-90 was the first year for which districts were specifically required by regulations to report results for two special populations, students excused from compulsory attendance who are schooled at home and students in special education programs.

Students Who Were Home Schooled

64, 58, and 18 students were reported as being home schooled in grades three, six and nine, respectively. Results reported for these students are presented, below, in terms of number tested, mean NCE, and percent demonstrating adequate achievement. The total number of students at each grade level is too small to define an adequate distribution of stanine scores for purposes of comparison either with the normal curve or with the statewide distribution of scores of regular students.

From Table 1 it can be seen that, except for mathematics at grade nine, home schooled students show the familiar pattern of a mean Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) that exceeds the expected value of 50, and a percentage of students demonstrating adequate achievement that exceeds 78%.

When the specific levels of achievement for students who were home-schooled are compared with those for all regular students, the results are quite similar except for reading at grade six and mathematics at grade nine. In five of the six similar comparisons, the group with the higher mean NCE has a slightly lower percentage of students demonstrating adequate achievement. This pattern is consistent with the conclusion that for these subjects at these grade levels the groups show equivalent achievement. Both the mean NCE and the percentage of students demonstrating adequate achievement in reading at grade six for students who were home schooled exceed those values for all regular public school students. In ninth-grade mathematics, the regular public school students show higher achievement on both indices. Whether these two differences are real or whether they might simply result from sampling error is

difficult to determine due to the relatively small number of students who are home schooled. In the absence of more detailed information about the variability of student scores within each group, a rigorous test of the hypothesis that there is no difference between groups is not possible.

Grade 3			
Subject	Number Tested	Mean NCE	Percent Demonstrating Adequate Achievement
Reading	64	56.0	84.4
Language	64	52.4	78.1
Mathematics	63	51.8	84.1
Grade 6			
Subject	Number Tested	Mean NCE	Percent Demonstrating Adequate Achievement
Reading	58	58.0	93.1
Language	58	50.7	81.0
Mathematics	58	54.0	86.2
Grade 9			
Subject	Number Tested	Mean NCE	Percent Demonstrating Adequate Achievement
Reading	17	51.5	88.2
Mathematics	18	42.7	66.7

Table 1 Number tested, mean NCE, and percentage of home-schooled students demonstrating adequate academic achievement in tests of reading, language, and mathematics from the CTBS/4 at grades three, six, and nine.

The number of home-schooled students taking the writing examination at grade nine and the percentage of students demonstrating adequate achievement in writing was not reported by districts, due to the proficiency testing office's failure to provide for the reporting of this information on the reporting forms used by the districts. This oversight will be corrected for the 1990-91 academic year.

There are very few students in the state of Nevada who are home schooled at grade eleven. Of those that are, most are completing high school through an approved correspondence course. Since these students are not working toward a standard high school diploma, they are not required to take the high school proficiency examinations and satisfy the requirement to demonstrate satisfactory progress through alternative means. The few cases that remain are included with regular the students in this document.

Special-Education Students

1989-90 was also the first academic year for which specific regulations required the reporting of results for students in special education programs. Some students in these programs are exempted from participation in the Proficiency Examination Program when it is determined not to be in the student's best interest and this exclusion is stated in the student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). The results for those special education students who are mainstreamed and participate in regular classrooms in one or more subject areas are included with those of regular students for those subjects. Those cases that remain, students who take one or more of the CTBS/4 tests but are not mainstreamed for that subject, represent a wide variety of conditions, circumstances and educational experiences. As such, reports of their results meet the requirements of the law but provide little useful information for the purposes of this report. The results for special education students who take the High School Proficiency Examination as a requirement for earning a standard diploma are included with those for regular students.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Statutes Governing the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program (1/1/90)

The Nevada Proficiency Examination Program for the 1988-1989 academic year was based upon the following laws which was passed by the State Legislature in 1977, and amended in 1983 and 1987.

NRS 389.015-.017 - STATUTES RELATING TO STUDENT TESTING

389.015 Achievement and proficiency examinations: Requirements; effect of failure to demonstrate adequate achievement or to pass; disclosure of questions and answers prohibited; exceptions.

1. The board of trustees of each school district shall administer examinations in all public schools within its district to determine the achievement and proficiency of pupils in:

(a) Reading;
(b) Writing; and
(c) Mathematics.

The examinations must be administered before the completion of grades 3, 6, 9 and 12.

2. Different standards of proficiency may be adopted for pupils with diagnosed learning disabilities.

3. If a pupil fails to demonstrate adequate achievement on the examination administered before the completion of grade 3, 6 or 9, he may be promoted to the next higher grade, but the results of his examination must be evaluated to determine what remedial study is appropriate. If a pupil fails to pass the high school proficiency examination administered before the completion of grade 12, he must not be graduated until he is able, through remedial study, to pass the high school proficiency examination, but he may be given a certificate of attendance, in place of a diploma, if he has reached the age of 17 years.

4. The state board shall prescribe standard examinations of achievement and proficiency to be administered pursuant to subsection 1. The questions contained in the examinations and the approved answers used for grading them are confidential, and disclosure is unlawful except:

(a) To the extent necessary for administering and evaluating the examinations.
(b) That a disclosure may be made to a state officer who is a member of the executive or legislative branch to the extent that it is related to the performance of that officer's duties.

389.017 Achievement and proficiency examinations: Submission of results to superintendent of public instruction.

The state board of education shall prescribe regulations requiring that each board of trustees of a school district submit to the superintendent of public instruction, in the form and manner prescribed by the superintendent, the results of achievement and proficiency examinations given in the 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th grades of public school pupils in the district. The state board shall not include in the regulations any provision which would violate the confidentiality of the test scores of any individual pupil.

APPENDIX B

NEVADA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE (NAC) PERTAINING TO THE PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION PROGRAM
January 1, 1990

Chapter 389, Section 1

1. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 2, the results of all examinations administered pursuant to NRS 389.015 to pupils in grades 3, 6 and 9 must be reported in writing by each district to the department of education no later than July 1 of each year. This report must be in the form prescribed by the department and must:

(a) Contain the results of all such examinations administered in the district during the preceding school year.
(b) State, for each subject and grade level, and for each school and the district as a whole:

(1) The total number of examinations administered;
(2) The percentage of students achieving proficient levels;
(3) The stanine distribution of the results; and
(4) The mean normal curve equivalent score achieved.

(c) Include the results of each examination administered to a handicapped pupil who participates in the regular educational program for the subject tested, unless his individualized educational program states that he is not capable of taking a standardized examination under standardized conditions.

2. The provisions of subsection 1 do not apply to the results of examinations administered to students who are excused from compulsory attendance in accordance with the provisions of NAC 392.015 to 392.075 inclusive. Those results must be reported separately, for each district as a whole, in the form prescribed by the department of education.

389.051 Times to administer examinations.

1. The board of trustees of each school district shall administer the examinations required by NRS 389.015 in each public school in that district which has the appropriate grades at the following times:

(a) For grades 3 and 6, the examinations may be administered at any time during the school year for which the publisher of the examinations has established empirical or interpolated national norms for those examinations.
(b) For grade 9, the examinations for reading and mathematics may be administered at any time during the school year for which the publisher of the examinations has established empirical or interpolated norms for those examinations.
(c) For grade 11, the examination for writing must be administered on the second Wednesday in February. If a holiday falls during the week of the second Wednesday in February, the examination must be administered on the third Wednesday in February.
(d) For grade 11, the examinations for reading and mathematics must be administered at sometime Monday through Thursday during the week of second Wednesday in February. If a holiday falls during that week, the examinations must be administered at some time Monday through Thursday during the week of the third Wednesday in February.
(e) For grade 12, the examination for writing must be administered to pupils in grade 12 who must pass the examination to graduate, on the second Wednesday in February, the last Thursday in April and the third Wednesday in October. If a holiday falls during the week of the second Wednesday in

February, the examination must be administered on the third Wednesday in February.
(f) For grade 12, the examinations for reading and mathematics must be administered to pupils in grade 12 who must pass the examinations to graduate, at some time Monday through Thursday during the week of the second Wednesday in February, the last Thursday in April, the last Thursday in June and the third Wednesday in October. If a holiday falls during the week of the second Wednesday in February, the examinations must be administered at some time Monday through Thursday during the week of the third Wednesday in February.
(g) For adults, the examination for writing must be administered to adult pupils who must pass the examination to graduate, on the second Wednesday in February, the last Thursday in April and the third Wednesday in October. If a holiday falls during the week of the second Wednesday in February, the examination must be administered on the third Wednesday in February.
(h) For adults, the examinations for reading and mathematics must be administered to adult pupils who must pass the examinations to graduate, at some time Monday through Thursday during the week of the second Wednesday in February, the last Thursday in April, the last Thursday in June, and at some time Monday through Thursday during the week of the third Wednesday in October. If a holiday falls during the week of the second Wednesday in February, the examinations must be administered at some time Monday through Thursday during the week of the third Wednesday in February.

2. The department of education may schedule a special administration of any examination required to be passed for graduation if:

(a) The person taking the examination is an adult or a pupil in grade 12;
(b) That person, through no fault of his own, was not able to take the examination at its most recent administration; and
(c) No regular administration of the examination is scheduled before the date on which the person is otherwise eligible to graduate.

389.056 Procedures for administration of examinations.

1. Achievement and proficiency examinations must be administered as follows:

(a) For grade 3, all examinations must be administered pursuant to the instructions in "Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Fourth Edition, Examiner's Manual: Level 13," copyright 1989 by CTB/McGraw-Hill.
(b) For grades 6 and 9, all examinations must be administered pursuant to the instructions in "Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Fourth Edition, Examiner's Manual: Levels 16 and 19/20," copyright 1989 by CTB/McGraw-Hill.
(c) For grade 9, the examination for writing must be administered pursuant to the instructions in "Administration Manual: 1988-1989 Nevada High School Proficiency Examinations in Mathematics, Reading and Writing," adopted by the department of education.
(d) For grades 11 and above, the examinations must be administered pursuant to the instructions in "Administration Manual: 1986-87 Nevada High School Proficiency Examination Mathematics, Reading and Writing," adopted by the department of education.

2. Each school principal shall, on a form developed by the department of education, verify that the procedures established in this section have been followed at his school.

389.061 Specific examinations required.

The following examinations must be used as examinations of achievement and proficiency:

1. For grade 3, the total reading section, mathematics section and language section of Level 13, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, fourth edition.

2. For grade 6, the total reading section, mathematics section and language section of Level 16, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, fourth edition.

3. For grade 9:

(a) The reading and mathematics sections of Level 19/20, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, fourth edition.
(b) The Nevada Proficiency Examination in Writing for the 9th grade prescribed by the department of education for each testing period.

4. For grades 11 and above:

(a) The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Reading;
(b) The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Mathematics; and
(c) The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Writing for the 11th grade and above, prescribed by the department of education for each testing period.

389.066 Scores indicating failure to demonstrate adequate achievement.

A pupil who earns any of the following scores on the examinations administered pursuant to NRS 389.015 has not demonstrated adequate achievement:

1. For grade 3 or 6, a score on the examination for reading, mathematics or writing at or below the 22nd percentile of the national norms for that examination.

2. For grade 9, a score on the examination for reading or mathematics at or below the 22nd percentile of the national norms for that examination.

3. For grade 9, a score on the examination for writing of below 6.

389.071 Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Writing.

Each edition of the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Writing for the 9th grade to be used after the spring of 1988, and each edition of the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Writing for the 11th grade and above to be used after the fall of 1988, must require pupils to write on two topics to be chosen from the following styles of writing:

1. Descriptive or narrative writing;

2. Expository writing; or

3. Persuasive writing.

389.076 Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Reading.

1. Each edition of the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Reading to be used after the fall of 1989 must assess pupils' skills in the following areas:

(a) Vocabulary and determining the meaning of words in context;
(b) Identifying details and main ideas in selections;
(c) Identifying the sequence of events in a selection or steps in a set of directions;
(d) Making comparisons and contrasts;
(e) Identifying causes and effects;
(f) Distinguishing between facts and opinions;
(g) Predicting outcomes and drawing conclusions based on the material read; and
(h) Understanding the author's intent.

2. Pupils may be tested in the areas listed in subsection 1 for:

(a) Their perception of words and the translation of those words into the explicit meaning of the ideas represented (literal comprehension);
(b) Their ability to understand implied meanings and discover relationships (inferential comprehension); and
(c) Their ability to use a background of experience to react to, judge and evaluate ideas or imagery received from the material, including the ability to accept or reject ideas as a result of their evaluation (critical reading).

3. Passages on the examination may include selections:

(a) Relating to literature, social studies, science, mathematics, occupational education, computer education and other areas of study included in the pupils' curriculum; and
(b) From informational materials such as periodicals, manuals, handbooks and other publications.

4. Each examination must contain an equal number of questions from each of the areas listed in subsection 1.

5. All questions on the examination must be presented as multiple choice questions.

389.081 Nevada High School Proficiency Examinations in Mathematics.

1. Each edition of the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Mathematics to be used after the fall of 1989 must assess pupils' skills in the following areas:

(a) Adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing whole numbers, decimals, fractions and percentages using a single step;
(b) Adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing whole numbers, decimals, fractions and percentages using multiple steps;
(c) Using formulas and simple equations;
(d) Solving problems involving measurements;
(e) Geometry; and
(f) Solving problems using information obtained from tables, charts, printouts, graphs, maps and scales.

2. The examination must emphasize the ability to solve problems and to apply the skills listed in subsection 1, not the ability to perform calculations.

3. Each examination must contain an equal number of questions from each of the areas listed in subsection 1.

4. All questions on the examination must be presented as multiple choice questions.

389.655 Passage of proficiency examinations.

1. A pupil may not be given a standard diploma until he has, after entering grade 11, passed:

(a) The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Reading;
(b) The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Mathematics; and
(c) The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Writing.

2. After entering grade 11, if a pupil passes one of the high school proficiency examinations, he is not required to take that examination again to graduate.

3. Passing scores on the high school proficiency examination are as follows:

(a) In reading, 370.
(b) In mathematics, 370.
(c) In writing, 6.

389.658 Submission of Results of Proficiency Examinations.

1. The board of trustees of each school district shall submit the results of proficiency examinations to the superintendent of public instruction by the time and in the form and manner he requires.

2. The superintendent shall annually notify each board of trustees of the requirements for submitting the results. He shall allow each board adequate time to schedule the examinations, obtain and evaluate the data and submit the results.

3. The duty of a board to submit the results is fulfilled when the superintendent receives the results from the board or from a central reporting agency. (Substituted in revision for NAC 389.090)

389.660 Additional Courses Required When Proficiency Not Demonstrated.

1. If a pupil has not demonstrated his proficiency in English or mathematics or passed the appropriate proficiency examination by the end of the 11th grade, he shall enroll in such additional courses as are appropriate.

2. Each school district shall prepare syllabuses for such additional courses. These syllabuses must include statements of educational methods and strategies which are different from those used in the regular courses. (Substituted in revision for NAC 389.095)

389.662 Proficiency Examinations for Pupil Who Transfers to Nevada High School.

A pupil who transfers to a Nevada high school from another school must pass the proficiency examination, administered pursuant to NRS 389.015, before he is graduated from the Nevada high school. (Substituted in revision for NAC 389.100)

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Regulations Governing the Participation of Home Schooled Students in the Proficiency Examination Program - NAC 392.065

1. A grant of an excuse from compulsory attendance at public school is effective for 1 school year.

2. Each child excused from compulsory attendance at public school for the first time under the provisions of NAC 392.015 to 392.075, inclusive, must be tested as provided in subsections 3 to 7, inclusive, before the excuse may be granted.

3. The board of trustees of the county school district shall require proof of reasonable educational progress as a condition for renewing the grant of excuse from compulsory attendance at public school.

4. Such proof of progress must be in the form required by NRS 389.015 and students in grades 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 must be tested by the district as part of its annual program for testing student achievement throughout the district. If the district does not have such a program at the grade level of the child, then the appropriate level of the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills must be used.

5. Any examination given pursuant to this section must be administered in the manner generally prescribed for examinations of the kind, without regard to the fact that the student being tested is excused or seeks to be excused from compulsory attendance. The board of trustees of the district shall select the administrator of the examination and the location where the examination is to be given, giving consideration to the recommendations of its staff and a representative of parents whose children are excused from attendance under the provisions of NAC 392.015 to 392.075, inclusive.

6. For a student enrolled in an approved correspondence program, the district may use report cards and transcripts as evidence of educational progress.

7. Educational progress for a student in grade 10 or 12 who is not enrolled in an approved correspondence program may be determined by considering samples of his work from the subjects required in the secondary school course of study, standardized tests or other measures agreed to by the parent and the board of trustees of the county school district.

8. As used in this section, "reasonable educational progress" means academic achievement within an average range when compared to:

(a) The child's age group;
(b) The child's grade level; or
(c) The child's predicted ability as measured by a standardized test.

NEVADA HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION IN WRITING

SCORING GUIDE

WRITING ASSESSMENT

Students should be rewarded for what they do well in response to the topics. All responses are to receive an appropriate score.

Readers should remember that papers were written within the constraints of a time limit (60 minutes for both topics) and without the use of a dictionary.

Papers that fall into the following categories MUST be given to the Table Leader:

- The paper is clearly off-topic.

  Off-topic papers are those whose content bears no resemblance to the assigned topic, not merely those in which the writer appears to have misunderstood the assignment.

- The paper contains obscene or extremely objectional material.

- The paper is blank.

SCORE SIX

A 6 paper is superior. It does ALL OR MOST of the following well:

- Addresses the topic clearly and effectively showing originality, creativity, and depth of thought.
- Develops ideas in a clear, logical, and detailed manner, displaying effective organization and coherence.
- Uses language effectively with a sense of control.
- Commits few, if any, errors in grammar/usage and mechanics.

SCORE FIVE

A 5 paper is distinctly above average. It has SOME OR ALL of the following characteristics:

- Addresses the topic clearly.
- Develops ideas well in an organized and coherent manner.
- Uses language effectively.
- Commits few errors in grammar/usage and mechanics.

SCORE FOUR

A 4 paper is adequate. It exhibits SOME OR ALL of the following characteristics:

- Adequately addresses the topic.
- Develops ideas in a satisfactory manner with adequate organization and coherence.
- Generally uses language clearly but occasionally displays some wordiness or ineffective diction.
- Commits some errors in grammar/usage and mechanics.

C - 2

SCORE THREE

A 3 paper is minimally adequate. It exhibits inadequacies in SOME OR ALL of the following ways:

- Addresses the topic but does not display mature style or well-developed content.
- Displays minimal development. It may contain irrelevancies and lack of logic, or digress or ramble.
- Uses language that is somewhat limited, simplistic, mundane, or otherwise inappropriate.
- Contains flaws in sentence structure, grammar/usage, and mechanics which do not impede meaning. It indicates some consistent misunderstanding of the conventions.

SCORE TWO

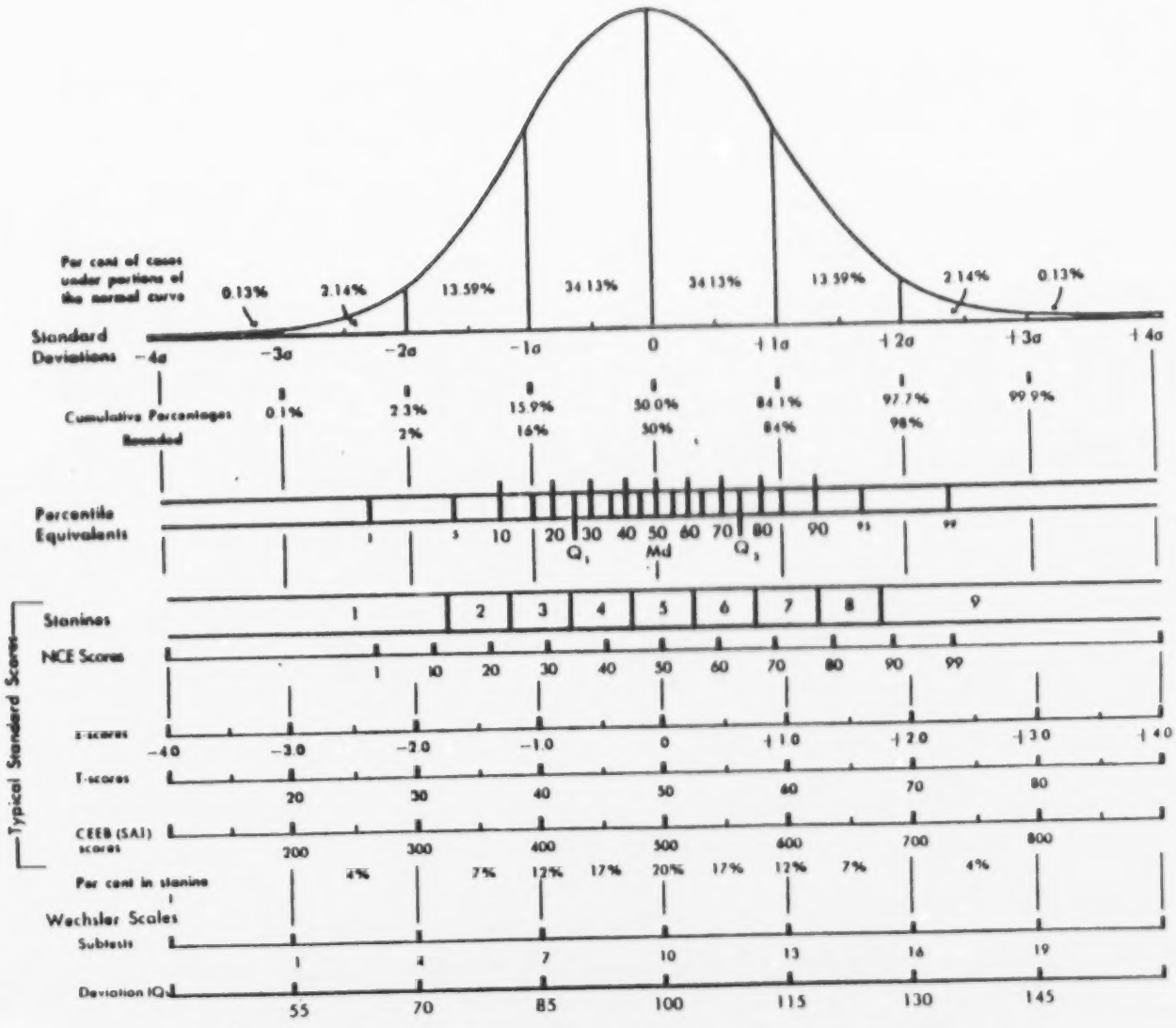
A 2 paper is very weak. It reveals serious and persistent problems in communications. It compounds the weaknesses of the 3 paper in SOME OR ALL of the following ways:

- Addresses the topic but basically lists items with little or no supporting detail.
- Contains serious flaws in development, organization, and coherence.
- Uses language that is highly limited, simplistic, or otherwise inappropriate.
- Displays consistent violations in sentence structure, grammar/usage, and mechanics which impede understanding.

SCORE ONE

A 1 paper is extremely weak. It has few redeeming qualities. It at least mentions the topic but generally fails to communicate with the reader. It does SOME OR ALL of the following:

- Simply repeats the topic or fails to provide adequate information.
- Shows almost no development, organization, or coherence.
- Uses language that shows an immature grasp of vocabulary and diction.
- Overwhelms the reader with serious violations of sentence structure, grammar/usage, and mechanics.



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